

## COVID-19– Vulnerable Toolkit

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What do we mean by Vulnerable?	p.1
Why we are still concerned for our Vulnerable Population	p.2
Tips on how to reduce risk of COVID-19	p.2
Advice for Friends and Family	p.4
Tested Positive: Next Steps	p.4
Useful Contacts	p.5

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### **What do we mean by Vulnerable?**

A vulnerable person is generally considered to be anyone at high risk of poorer health outcomes following illness, or may require additional support to protect themselves against significant harm. With regard to COVID-19 those that are considered vulnerable:

- are aged over 60 years
- have poorly controlled long-term conditions; such as respiratory, heart, kidney, or liver disease
- are immunosuppressed; for example, those receiving cancer treatment, taking corticosteroids, are on anti-TNF therapy or have poorly controlled HIV/AIDS
- are part of the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) cohort
- pregnant women in their third trimester
- have a combination of the factors above

People who are deemed vulnerable and may be eligible for early intervention COVID-19 antiviral treatment are listed below:

1. Down's syndrome
2. Sickle Cell Disease
3. You currently have cancer or have received treatment for cancer in the last 12 months (chemotherapy in past 12 months or radiotherapy in past 6 months)
4. You have leukaemia, lymphoma, or myeloma or have had treatment for these or other blood cancers in the last 12 months or have received a stem cell or bone marrow transplant for any reason. Other haematological diseases that require immunosuppressant treatment (e.g., aplastic anaemia, paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria)
5. You have severe kidney failure, are on dialysis or have had a kidney transplant
6. You have severe liver disease or have had a liver transplant
7. You have an immune/ auto-immune disease which is treated with immunosuppressant drugs
8. You have a diagnosed immune deficiency syndrome
9. You have HIV
10. You have received an organ transplant (heart, lungs, pancreas etc).
11. You have one of the following neurological conditions: Multiple sclerosis, Motor neurone disease, Myasthenia gravis or Huntington's disease.

*[If you belong to any of the vulnerable cohorts and test positive for COVID-19 please call 111 and notify them immediately]*

## **Why we are still concerned for our Vulnerable Population**

There are key reasons for concern surrounding our vulnerable population, namely:

1. They may not mount as strong an immune response to the vaccinations as others; the current vaccine is now down to around 75% effectivity against hospitalisations (whilst this is still good, equivalent protection from the delta variant was 100%).
2. We know from hospital research undertaken globally that those who are vulnerable experience worse health outcomes from the disease if hospitalised.

## **Tips on how to reduce risk of COVID-19**

People classed as vulnerable, especially those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, may wish to continue taking steps to help prevent themselves from coming into contact and falling ill with COVID-19 (as per other cough, cold and flu viruses). Whilst it is no longer necessary to stay home (and 'shield') it is sensible to:

- Get vaccinated against COVID-19 and take advantage of any boosters offered
  - Wait for at least 14 days after vaccination before meeting with people
  - Meet people outside if possible
  - Open doors and windows to let in fresh air if meeting people inside
  - Limit the number of people you meet and avoid crowded places
  - Consider wearing a face covering. Though it may not be a legal requirement, COVID-19 spreads through droplets in the air. It is prudent to continue wearing a face covering on public transport and in close crowded settings when it's hard to stay away from other people (particularly indoors)
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- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day, and cover coughs and sneezes.

# HOW TO WEAR A MEDICAL MASK SAFELY

[who.int/epi-win](http://who.int/epi-win)

## Do's →

- Wash your hands before touching the mask
- Inspect the mask for tears or holes
- Find the top side, where the metal piece or stiff edge is
- Ensure the colored-side faces outwards
- Place the metal piece or stiff edge over your nose
- Cover your mouth, nose, and chin
- Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides
- Avoid touching the mask
- Remove the mask from behind the ears or head
- Keep the mask away from yourself and from surfaces while removing it
- Discard the mask immediately after use, preferably into a closed bin
- Wash your hands after discarding the mask

## Don'ts →

- Do not use a ripped or damp mask
- Do not wear the mask only over mouth or nose
- Do not wear a loose mask
- Do not touch the front of the mask
- Do not remove the mask to talk to someone or do other things that would require touching the mask
- Do not leave your used mask within the reach of others
- Do not re-use the mask

Remember that masks alone cannot protect you from COVID-19. Stay at least 1 meter away from others and wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, even while wearing a mask.

## **Get tested and stay at home if you have symptoms:**

If a vulnerable person develops any of the main symptoms of COVID-19 (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, unexplained headaches or a loss/ change to the sense of smell or taste), it is important to get tested quickly- even if symptoms are mild.

Those testing positive may be eligible for, and benefit from, antiviral treatments that are particularly effective when started quickly after symptoms begin.

## **Advice for friends and family**

It is normal to feel a heightened sense of anxiety if you are in contact with someone who is considered to be vulnerable and high risk of COVID-19, however there are steps you may take to reduce the risk of spread to them.

- Consider the risks when you are meeting in person according to different settings and scenarios; decide whether options are suitable for you/ your vulnerable others needs e.g. the size of the location, amount of ventilation, and numbers of people attending etc.
- When in close contact indoor settings consider using a face covering, particularly during times of the year known to be viral seasons (late autumn / winter).
- Consider taking a rapid lateral flow test before visiting your high risk friend or family member. Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. This means they could be spreading the virus without knowing it. Rapid lateral flow tests can be used to detect COVID-19 when you are infectious but are not displaying symptoms, helping you to make sure you do not spread COVID-19.
- Try to stay at home if you're feeling unwell. Even if you do not have COVID-19 symptoms, or a previous COVID-19 test has been negative, you may still have an illness which could be passed on to others. Many common illnesses, like the flu or the common cold, are spread from one person to another. Staying away from a vulnerable person until you feel better will reduce the risk of passing on any illness to them.

## **Tested Positive: Next Steps**

If you have tested positive on a Lateral Flow test (LFT) or you have tested negative but are strongly symptomatic, you will need to call 111 to arrange a PCR test and allow triaging by a Clinical Advisor.

Those found to be positive will be required to home isolate for up to 10 days (day 6 & 7 lateral flow tests will be offered, if both of these are negative you can exit home isolation on day 7).

Those who are deemed vulnerable are advised to contact their consultant to discuss any additional measures to be taken.

The Health Protection Team will actively follow up positive vulnerable cases by telephone.

Antiviral treatment may be provided; this will be offered on a case by case basis.

## **Useful Contacts**

If concerned regarding symptoms of COVID-19 at **ANY TIME** – Call: 111

Covid Vaccination Team – available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Call: 200 66966

GP appointments - Call: 200 52441

GP Home visits – Call: 200 72429

Repeat prescriptions – Call: [200 07909](tel:20007909) or Email: [prescriptionrepeats@gha.gi](mailto:prescriptionrepeats@gha.gi)

On Duty Pharmacy – Call: 200 79700 and ask the call centre for the relevant pharmacy's telephone number. [You can also contact the Hospital **Pharmacy** on Tel: 200 07107]

GibSams – free to call support line if you want to talk to someone in confidence, open from 6pm to midnight every day. Call: 116 123

Social Services – Call: 200 78528

Police - 190